The Cracks in the Concrete conference was a really great experience to participate in. I felt the level of intentionality that went into making the event inclusive and educational. It was beautiful to be a part of a community that was critically discussing a wide variety of racial and social issues we need to be confronting. I will definitely volunteer for the next conference!

- Libby Oliver, volunteer

I registered for the Cracks in the Concrete conference as soon as I learned that Kat Blaque was one of the main speakers. Her conversation with Janet Rogers filled my heart, knowing how many of the youth I support look up to Kat as a role model.

- Audrey Wolfe, participant

I came down from Vancouver because I was at last year’s conference and it went so well. This year’s was also great and I’m looking forward to more workshops, important keynote speakers, and fun next year.

- Daniel Tseghay, speaker

This conference was amazing. Many of my students attended the conference and they expressed that it was an important experience to put ideas to practice, and network with people beyond their field of expertise.

- Dr Moustapha Fall, speaker

and many more...
Moustapha Fall had an upbringing familiar to a lot of Canadians. He spoke one language to Mom and Dad at home, then studied in another at school. So while he can understand and speak his parents’ language fluently, he can’t read or write it at all.

With more than one in five Canadians born outside the country, a lot of us can relate.

Except Fall’s story comes not from Canada, but Senegal. At home he spoke Wolof, just like many of the African country’s people, while school was in French. The latter is Senegal’s official language but the mother tongue of just two per cent of its population.

Fall, who teaches applied linguistics in the University of Victoria’s French department, is researching whether the absence of literacy in people’s first language affects their ability to learn in their second.

His interests overlap those of another UVic academic, Ewa Czaykowska-Higgins, whose work in the linguistics department focuses largely on the Salish languages of the West Coast.

They will be two of the participants in a UVic panel discussion on the future of language tonight. Both believe in the value of being educated in your native tongue first, then using that base to learn another.

With Canada having a large proportion of immigrants — not to mention two official languages, plus scores of indigenous languages that range from thriving to barely hanging on — we’re familiar with the idea of people who grow up with one language at home but another at school. The thing is, what we think of the Canadian experience is not at all rare, linguists say. Nor is the way in which it can hinder learning.

“This is a serious problem around the world,” Czaykowska-Higgins says. It applies not only to, say, Spanish speakers in the U.S. or to former colonies such as Senegal, but to parts of the globe that aren’t thought of as linguistically diverse. We tend to view European languages as monolithic, but even there countries are divided by dialects and minor languages such as Kashubian, which more than 100,000 Poles speak at home, or Friulan, spoken by half a million Italians. Half the people on the planet might use the 10 most common languages, but there are still another 7,000 languages spoken today.

Both professors say overall literacy would improve if people could learn in their mother tongue first — though there are some obvious roadblocks. “Clearly, there’s an economic issue that is not easy to solve,” Czaykowska-Higgins says. The logistics and cost would cause school administrators to swallow their gum.

There’s also the troubling question of whether isolating students in language silos builds strong ethnic communities at the expense of national unity, dividing us.

Czaykowska-Higgins and Fall say that’s coming at the issue the wrong way. The idea isn’t to learn languages in isolation, but to use a solid grounding in your mother tongue to transition to the language that is dominant.

Strong skills in the mother tongue lead to strong skills in other languages, Fall argues, and that makes for improved communication. “We need multilingualism to understand each other.”

“Languages can be used politically to divide, but languages themselves don’t divide,” Czaykowska-Higgins says. “I think we need to be comfortable with variety and difference.”

They also say the first-language-first idea doesn’t clash with French immersion programs, given that students in those classes are otherwise surrounded by English all the time.

Canada has a hierarchy of language, Czaykowska-Higgins says: English dominates, even though French has equal standing under law. After them come the immigrant languages. Then come the indigenous languages that officialdom tried to snuff out for so long.

Immigrants have the advantage of being able to brush up on a language by returning to the old country; aboriginals do not. Still, Czaykowska-Higgins is enthusiastic about revitalization efforts in indigenous communities: “It’s not just a story of loss.”

Retaining languages is about more than literacy, Fall argues. If you cease to use your mother tongue, you lose the way the accompanying culture views the world.

The panel discussion, which kicks off the Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group’s weekend Cracks in the Concrete conference, is at 6:30 p.m. today in the Michele Pujol Room at UVic’s Student Union Building.
Lots of Tweets and Retweets

@VIPIRG media panel starting in downtown yyj yyjevents vipirg

Looking forward to the @VIPIRG conference this weekend! I'll be speaking at the future of media panel on Saturday.

VIPIRG PRESENTS
CRACKS IN THE CONCRETE
MARCH 24-26, 2017
ISMS OF THE 22ND CENTURY

Check out @VIPIRG's awesome conference, “Cracks in the Concrete.” Register NOW vipirg.ca uvic yyj yyjevents camosun

Many Rivers Permaculture
@WeAreManyRivers

Cracks in the Concrete (Mar 24-26)

Cracks in the Concrete - VIPIRG
With gratitude, thank you to the following organizations for making this conference possible: CFUV Radio & UVic School of Environmental Studies UVic Department of
vipirg.ca

1:01 PM - 24 Mar 2017

Casual reminder *squeals* that @kat_blaque is here for the @VIPIRG conference this weekend! vipirg.ca/conference/ yyj VictoriaBC

Leslie Saxon
@saxson_leslie

Tonight! Cracks in the Concrete, VIPIRG conference, @UVic SUB 6:30-8:30 Future of language revitalization @UVicLinguistics @UVicHumanities

9:39 PM - 24 Mar 2017

Listening to @kat_blaque speaking in Victoria right now. Such an amazing conversation that I'm glad I'm getting to listen to. #vipirg
Day 1: Opening Panel

The Future of Language
The opening panel was moderated by VIPIRG’s Outreach Coordinator and 1st year Geography student, Dakota Mc Govern. The panel featured Dr. Moustapha Fall, Dr Czaykowska-Higgins, and Ashlee Pepákiye Cooper. The discussion started with a 5 minute presentation from each panellist about language bias, and indigenous language revitalization.

Day 2: Concurrent Panels

The Future of Media
Almost entirely comprised of University of Victoria students the panel was a conversation on how media is evolving and how our information sources are both broadening and changing our understanding of ourselves and our communities in the digital age. It was moderated by Duncan Jones-Marsh, a UVic student.

The Future of Consent Culture
The panel was chaired by University of Victoria student and VIPIRG Board Member, Shyam Singh. Panellists addressed how to progress from talking about consent purely on a personal and sexual level, to how consent culture can affect us on a systemic level. Examples of systemic levels are the medical industry, employment, neocolonialism, and land. It was moderated by UVic student, Lucy Hagos.
The Future of Education
Comprised of UVic Professors and students, the panel focused on the links between colonisation and the current Prussian model of education, special education, and non-compulsory schooling.

The Future of Climate Change
The panel addressed the question, “What will climate change look like for the people who are most affected?” There were three panelists, all of whom are UVic students.

The Future of Sustainable Fashion and Manufacturing
This panel was a critical conversation about fashion, cultural appropriation, and appreciation, local buying and manufacturing, and what the future of these could look like. It featured Daniel Tseghay, local artist Zofia Rogowski, and owner of “Who Dyd Your Hair” Salon, Yolande Johnston.

SPECIAL EVENT: A CONVERSATION WITH KAT BLAQUE
THE CONFERENCE FEATURED YOUTUBE STAR, KAT BLAQUE, IN CONVERSATION WITH AUTHOR AND FORMER VICTORIA POET LAUREATE, JANET ROGERS. KAT SHARED HER EXPERIENCE BUILDING HER BRAND AND USING SOCIAL MEDIA (SPECIFICALLY YOUTUBE) TO HIGHLIGHT VARIOUS SOCIAL INJUSTICES IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

Sponsors
- CFUV Radio
- UVic School of Environmental Studies
- UVic Department of Gender Studies
  - UVic French Department
  - UVic Social Justice Studies Program
- Norah McRae & UVic Office of Community University Engagement
  - UVic Faculty of Social Sciences
    - UVic Third Space
    - UVic Faculty of Education
- UVic School of Public Health & Social Policy
- UVic Office of Community University Engagement